

Christian Community

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American Christians Examine American Responsibility

A Report on the Cleveland World Order Conference

By Herman F. Reissig

From Tuesday noon to Friday evening, October 27-30, 1953, more than four hundred American Christians meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, took another earnest look at American responsibility in the present international situation. This article will not tell you much about the conclusions reached at Cleveland. Its purpose is to arouse a desire in individual Christians and in churches for a careful study of what four hundred of their fellow Christians think about current world problems and about what the American people and their government should do.

Who Were They?

The conference was convened by the Department of International Justice and Goodwill of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Urged on by many people who felt that it was about time a representative group of Christians put their minds together on the world situation, the Department agreed more than a year ago to call the conference. The men and women who met in Cleveland were appointed by their denominations, by local church federations and by national and international agencies, such as United Church Women and the "Y's," each one of these units being allotted a number of delegates in proportion to its membership. About 18 members of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and 30 members of the Congregational Christian Churches were present as delegates of their denominations or in some other capacity. An informal poll taken at the conference showed that at least half of the delegates were lay people, and that large numbers of the men and women were attending a national church conference for the first time. Many were present because they have special competence in one or another aspect of international affairs. Many others were representative only of rank-and-file



Mrs. Douglas Horton, chairman of the National Council of Churches Department of International Justice and Goodwill, presided over the National Study Conference. Shown with her are Raymond Wilson and John Bennett, members of the Message Committee.

Christian concern in this area. A few government officers were there in an advisory capacity. Specialists in United Nations affairs were on hand. The missionary interests were well represented. Strong differences of opinion, which developed into debates on some subjects, showed that no one point of view determined the choice of delegates. It was by no means a conference confined to ecclesiastical bureaucrats. The professor of political economy from Illinois sat next to the manufacturer of ball bearings from Philadelphia. A lay woman from Columbus took the floor following a denominational secretary from New York.

For Whom and to Whom Did They Speak?

Appointed by their denominations, the delegates could not, and did not try to

speak for their churches and agencies. They spoke for themselves. They hoped that what they agreed upon would seem wise and be helpful to others but they could commit neither the National Council of Churches nor the denominations nor the local church. The question, "To whom did they speak?" is best answered in a sentence taken from the conference "Message." "We will seek, therefore, to speak as Christians and as American citizens to American citizens about American responsibilities in the world community." The delegates did not try to produce a set of directives for government officers, although it would seem likely that political leaders will take note of what the conference said. Recommendations, resolutions, and analyses were adopted, mainly, for such guidance as they might provide for the

American public and, more especially, for the people in our churches.

How Did the Conference Go About Its Work?

Before the readers of this paper decide to get excited about what this conference said (even if 400 Christians did give four days of concentrated thought to foreign affairs!) they will want to know if the delegates did something more than speak off the top of their minds. For more than six months prior to Cleveland five commissions, with about fifteen people in each one, did intensive preparatory work. "Background" or "working" papers were drafted, criticized, re-drafted, gone over again and written once more. Scores of persons put in many hours of intensive study and discussion, in an effort to provide good starting points for the conference. Before leaving home every delegate received the results of this preliminary work. At Cleveland little time was spent in listening to prepared speeches. Divided into four sections, the delegates gave most of the hours to close examination of the four main subjects, "The United States and the United Nations," "The United States and Foreign Economic Policy," "The United States and the Underdeveloped Areas," "The United States and Collective Security." Speaking for the section of which he was a member, it is this writer's impression that the discussion was an excellent demonstration of really creative and helpful group thinking.

Every section re-wrote its working

paper almost completely before presenting it to the whole conference. These sectional reports were "received" by the conference, after debates and changes, and "recommended to the churches for study." In addition, the conference adopted a "Message" on "The Christian Faith and International Responsibility." This Message was prepared by a strong committee, with the help of suggestions from each of the sections. Finally, the general principles of the Message were applied to twelve specific current issues, in the form of conference Resolutions. From this conference we have, therefore, three kinds of material for study in the churches. First, comprehensive analyses, with recommendations, of the four subjects mentioned above. Second, a conference "Message," which sets forth general principles and deals with the current world situation in broad terms. Third, twelve brief resolutions on such matters as China, Surplus Foods, Negotiations with Communist Countries, and Technical Assistance.

What Next?

Before, during, and immediately following the conference unusual attention was given to the "follow-up." The opinions of those who met in Cleveland will doubtless make some impression in the Department of State, in the United Nations, and will carry some weight with others in responsible positions, but the real value of this conference depends on the people who were not there—you who read this article and your fellow Christians in every part of the

CLEVELAND SAID—

"Within the United States there are powerful factors moving us toward cooperation, and other forces which would lead us to withdrawal and isolation. Recognition that even enlightened self-interest requires responsiveness to the world's needs has been shown in the employment of American skill and wealth in rebuilding war-ravaged economies through the Marshall Plan and in upbuilding technically less developed areas through the Point IV Program. Over against such acts of statesmanship examples of irresponsibility toward the world community can be cited, such as pressure for restrictive tariff policies, discriminatory sections in the Immigration Act of 1952, and wholesale resistance to continuing foreign aid without offering a constructive alternative. Christian faith teaches us that we are placed by God in an order of material and spiritual interdependence, and that we go against the grain of His order when we fail to recognize that interdependence or to play our full part in the processes of mutual cooperation which it demands."

country. If in thousands of churches and inter-church groups the Message and Findings are studied—not merely commented on from the pulpit—the influence of this gathering may be great. You are urged, therefore, to see to it that the materials which will shortly be ready are ordered for use in your church. This is what you can get:

- I. "*The Christian Faith and International Responsibility*." (48 pp., available December 10—30c per copy.) This booklet will contain the conference Message and the Findings of the four study sections.
- II. "*We Are Responsible*." (48 pp., available January 20—30c) This booklet will analyze the Message and Findings and contain many helps for group study and discussion. It will include suggestions on how you and your church can carry the Cleveland conclusions into action—if you agree with them.

Place your order for these booklets now with the Department of Publication, National Council of Churches, 120 East 23d Street, New York 10, New York.

The Conference Said:

On the general American approach to world problems: "We (Christians) greatly need the insights and concerns of Christians in other lands to correct our limitations and prejudices as citizens of one nation . . . As American Christians, we need to resist the temptation to believe that a nation which publicly pro-

WE RECOMMEND THESE RESOURCES TO KEEP ABREAST OF WORLD PROBLEMS

The Christian Faith and International Responsibility, a 48-page pamphlet containing the Message and Findings from the four study sections of the 1953 National Study Conference on the Churches and World Order. Available December 10, at 30 cents per copy, from the Department of Publication, National Council of Churches, 120 E. 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y., or from the Commission on Christian Social Action. (Reduced rates for quantities).

We Are Responsible, a Study Guide to the Message and Findings (item immediately above), 30 cents, available January 20 from above address. One chapter on the Message and one on each of the four Cleveland study topics—the United Nations, Foreign Economic Policy, Underdeveloped Areas, Collective Security.

A Christian Newsletter on International Affairs, issued monthly for one dollar per year, by the Department of International Justice and Goodwill of the National Council, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y. Reports current world issues, the position of the churches, and what Christians can do to influence U. S. foreign policy.

The Churches and the United Nations, by Walter W. Van Kirk. A 24-page pamphlet summarizing the failures and achievements of the UN. Available for 15 cents from the Department of Publication, or from CCSA.

Christian Ethics and U. S. Foreign Policy, an annotated reading list and guide to current information, by Ernest W. Lefever. This 26-page guide includes not only books and pamphlets; it also recommends responsible magazines, newspapers, radio and TV commentators. Available from the Department of International Justice and Goodwill for 35 cents.

American Churches and International Affairs, a compilation of official statements of the Federal and National Councils of Churches, prepared by Ernest W. Lefever. Available from the Department of International Justice and Goodwill, for 25 cents.

CLEVELAND SAID—

"We believe that Christian citizens should work for the growth of world trade and the gradual reduction or elimination of artificial barriers to trade. Accordingly, it is our conviction that the United States should reduce or eliminate import tariffs and trade quotas principally through . . . continuance of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements program and participation in the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade . . . A willingness upon the part of the United States to accept more imports not only is economically and morally the logical resultant of our creditor position but also is beneficial both to the world economy and to our own."

fesses Christian ideals is thereby assured of divine approval on its policies. And we must especially avoid the assumption that a solution lies in making the rest of the world over as nearly as possible into the pattern of the United States . . . As a people, we must learn to accept other nations not only as partners but also as instruments of judgment on our national actions." . . .

On the ferment in the underdeveloped areas: "The idea of technical assistance is one of the great ideas of our time . . . Americans should rejoice in the revolt of these peoples against immemorial misery and stand ready to associate themselves with this struggle for a better future . . . The judgment of God as well as the wrath of men is visited upon those to whom much is given if they do not seek for all men emancipation from conditions which stand in the way of their legitimate economic, social and political development."

On McCarthyism: "The demagoguery which, in the name of 'Americanism,' seeks to exploit fears, foment suspicion, by-pass due process of law, and stifle differences of opinion, is a most grievous type of un-Americanism . . . There is serious danger that in an anxious quest for security in an insecure world, our people will fail to distinguish between a legitimate security from espionage and a bogus security from dissent."

On the United Nations: "As Christians and citizens of the U.S., we have an inescapable obligation to support the U.N. as a body essential to the freedom of nations and the peace of the world."

On negotiations with Russia: "Every opportunity to develop even a temporary easing of tensions should be seized by the United States, and we should give no grounds for accusations of intransigence or of closing the door to negotiation."

But these quotes give hardly a hint of



The Church and Social Responsibility. Edited by J. Richard Spann. Abingdon-Cokesbury. \$2.75.

This symposium contains fifteen chapters by as many writers, grouped under the themes, "The Social Ministry of the Church," "Basic Human Rights and the Community," "The Church and the Economic Order," and "The Church and the Political Order." Although one-third of the contributors are on the faculty of the Boston University School of Theology, there are also excellent articles by Joseph Haroutunian of McCormick, Oren Baker of Colgate-Rochester, and by Cameron Hall and Walter Van Kirk of the National Council of Churches staff. Noteworthy is the fact that the essay on "World Economic Problems" was written by Eddy Asirvatham of Nagpur University (India).

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Add Life To Their Years, by Catharine Lee Wahlstrom. Department of Publication and Distribution, National Council of Churches. \$1.00.

The author of this pamphlet has come to the National Council of Churches as associate executive director of the Department of Social Welfare out of a rich background of social work experience. Though primarily a manual of activity programs for homes for the aged, and thus most valuable for administrators, chaplains, and workers in such homes, the interpretative comments and activity suggestions should be exceedingly helpful to pastors and officers of local churches not only in carrying out projects involving the residents of these institutions but also in planning their church program for the aging.

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Christianity and the Problem of His-

the wide-ranging analyses and recommendations that emerged from the conference. The emphasis was not on pronouncements but on a careful examination of where we stand and what the U.S. ought to do. Get the booklets referred to above and sit down with them, preferably with others in your church. Let the discussion begin, not end, with the adjournment of this conference! Let us see in what measure Christians, from Maine to California, agree with what was said at Cleveland! Make arrangements now for doing some real thinking in your church!

Speaking of Books

tory, by Roger L. Shinn. Scribners, \$4.50.

God Hidden and Revealed, by John Dillenberger. Muhlenberg Press. \$2.50.

These volumes have been written by younger theologians of the Evangelical and Reformed Church engaged in teaching, Dr. Shinn at Heidelberg College and Dr. Dillenberger at Columbia University. They deal with the sorts of theological and philosophical principles with which pastors and social action leaders need to wrestle if their efforts are to be in proper focus. The relevance of the Christian understanding of history, which is the theme of Dr. Shinn's book, will be at once evident; and the author maintains a creative tension between the "eschatological," the "ecclesiastical," and the "dynamic" interpretations of the Kingdom of God. Dr. Dillenberger probes the varying views of revelation and hiddenness which not only have their bearing upon our personal religious experience but also have implications for the historical and the social problem.

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The Churches and the United Nations. Walter W. Van Kirk. National Council of Churches. 15 cents.

The United Nations—Action for Peace: A Layman's Guide. Marie and Louis Zocca. Rutgers University Press. 35 cents.

The Hate Campaign Against the U.N. Gordon D. Hull. Beacon Press. 50 cents.

These three pamphlets are most useful for those who wish a concise arsenal of information to meet the confusion and misrepresentation that abound. Dr. Van Kirk's pamphlet sets forth a responsible

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CLEVELAND SAID—

"The United States has a moral obligation to protect her own security. This obligation extends not only to her own security; it involves the effort to realize through many channels the values of freedom, justice and peace for other nations and eventually for the entire world community. Actually this is the best, and it is increasingly becoming the only, adequate method to protect our nation . . . This country is committed to the pursuit of collective security through the UN. We believe that the UN furnishes the basic framework through which our nation should seek its security."

National Council Issues Washington Memo

There must be literally thousands of members of our churches who want to have a report of what goes on in Washington as seen by on-the-spot churchmen. Some years ago the Council for Social Action published *Washington Report*. About 5,000 subscribers paid \$1.00 per year for that monthly publication. Later the Washington secretary wrote and circulated a mimeographed sheet called *Legislative Action Service*. Due to the costs of publication and distribution these had to be suspended.

Now the Washington office of the National Council of Churches has made available to all who desire it the *Memo*, on a subscription basis of one dollar per year. *Memo* is published twice a month. Originally it was designed for denominational executives, hence the name. Now it will be written with the interests of pastors and church members in view. Sample copies are available on request.

As you see from the enclosed leaflet you should send your dollar and address to Miss Nadine Blair, 122 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington 2, D. C.

Memo will keep you up-to-date on national legislation of interest to church people. Send your subscription now.

Dissenting Opinion

The following comment is from a Letter to the Editor written by the Social Action Committee of the Mayflower Community Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota, with reference to Shirley Greene's column on Economic Life which appeared in the September issue of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. We are happy to give space to a statement into which the committee has apparently put both time and thought.

"Mr. Greene's article defines, at its beginning, two kinds of corruption. Then he goes on to call attention to some of the drives to 'corrupt' America's natural resources. First, mention is made of the tidelands oil matter. Our committee believes, and this is shared by those members who were not in favor of giving tidelands control to the states, that there is no intent of corruption on the part of the Eisenhower administration in having pressed for the enactment of this legislation. It is a perversion and misstatement to label such action as 'corrupt' or to imply that it is a 'legal fix.' We believe that it is not a corrupt action as Mr. Greene states, and that he has written nothing to substantiate such loose talk but his own previous definition of the two kinds of corruption.

"We take exception also to his use of the phrase 'free (booting) enterprise' as implying that whenever private enterprise undertakes to develop the country's resources they are pirates or exploiters. For example, would Mr. Greene consider the large steel and mining companies who are spending upwards of 400 millions of dollars to develop the taconite (low grade iron ore) reserves in northern Minnesota 'free booters' because of their venture upon this undertaking? Certainly questions of government or private ownership and development of our natural resources and public utilities

cannot be settled from the basis of whether one or the other is 'Christian' or 'moral.'

"We think that Mr. Greene, who has been in charge of agricultural matters for the Council for Social Action, has, in the paragraph referring to the 160 acre limitation on reclaimed lands, lost sight of the great technological advancements which have obviated the need for these restrictions. An individual farmer now can successfully and easily farm more than 160 acres.

"Lastly, we think his remarks about the danger to the REA cooperatives is unrealistic and unjustified. At the 1953 annual meeting of the REA's just held at Rapid City, S. D., it was reported by Anchor Nelson, the administrator, that more loans have been made in the first nine months of 1953 than in any previous year. It should be pointed out that we feel the REA's met a great need in providing electricity to rural areas, but that it was not always a case of the private utilities 'persistently refusing to go.' If, for example, the private utilities had expanded into the sparsely settled areas of western North and South Dakota where the density per mile is so low as respects population, they would have bankrupted themselves to the detriment of all their consumers. Concerning the matter of transmission lines, obviously new ones will have to be built in many cases, but it will often serve all

FOR YOUR SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

The most significant thing you can do this month is to get together, discuss Mr. Reissig's report on the Cleveland Conference, and make plans to develop your own study and action program on the basis of it. Order the message and the study guide. See how you can channel this study into all the organizations of your church. Or, plan now for five sessions of study for the whole church on the five chapters—during February or March. Sound material for your Lenten program.

needs if existing lines are used and expanded. Since the Bureau of Reclamation has worked out satisfactory arrangements in many of the western states wherein REA generating cooperatives and private utilities, municipal utilities and REA consumer cooperatives are satisfied, there is no justification for the remark that the private utilities are out to go the oil grabbers or 'corrupters' one better . . .

"We regret that we have found it necessary to express this criticism of an article in the *Christian Community*, which in the main is fair in its statements of opinions and stimulating and inspirational in its outlook."

SPEAKING OF BOOKS

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churchman's evaluation of the achievements and weaknesses of the UN. The Zocca booklet (now revised) is a most clear, up-to-date interpretation of the structure, work and history of the UN, illustrated with charts and drawings as well as photographs. Mr. Hall gives names and cases of individuals and groups behind the attack against world cooperation. All together a good value for your dollar!

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Sent free to interested pastors and social action committees. Subscription rate to others, 50 cents per year. Additional copies may be obtained for 3 cents each. Requests from Congregational Christians should be addressed to Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.